

The background of the slide is a photograph of the interior of a Gothic-style church. It features high, vaulted stone ceilings with pointed arches. Large windows with multiple panes are visible, allowing natural light to fill the space. The walls and columns are made of light-colored stone, and there are decorative elements like carvings and a checkered tile pattern on the floor.

# Sanctuary in Jesus

Week 1 - Part 2  
Encouraging Objections,  
are we hearing or  
listening?

## Encouraging objections - are we hearing or listening?

When you discover someone has an objection or expresses disbelief that you can possibly have faith, the temptation is to dive straight in with arguments **or** to avoid upsetting them by backing away entirely with a “you-do-you” approach.

Neither is a good response.

We must never forget that when people object to faith they may be carrying negative experiences or an understanding that supports their current stance.

Research shows us that people are only likely to be open to changing deeply held beliefs when they engage in a mutually empathetic conversations.

Empathy is where we understand, appreciate, and relate to what a person is experiencing, believing, and/or feeling.

Another research study watched this process occur when one person listened to another participant describe a TV scene they had watched. The speakers brain waves looked the same as when they first watched the scene, but interestingly the same neural pattern began to occur in the listening participants but **ONLY** where the listener was **actively listening**. This study has become foundational in our understanding of how we can transmit thoughts, feelings, and memories to another person.

To be clear, empathy does not mean abandoning your own principles or understanding, it does enable you to fully grasp someone else’s ideas and position. This in turn allows you to build a response that is more likely to be received well.

## Time to practise this:

Review the good and bad listening habits above.

Thinking about the theme for today – “Hosanna, Jesus as our saviour”, Can you actively listen to a member of your group talk for two minutes on one of the questions below – if anyone from your group has a question about today’s topic, please work with that too.

Put a dot or line down on your booklet every time you notice your mind has drifted off or you have begun to repeat your personal bad habit.

1. How do you believe that Jesus will save you?
2. Why does it matter what Jesus did 2000yrs ago?
3. Why is it a good idea to be a Christian when Jesus was killed on a cross?
4. What’s the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey?

Discuss how you found this and try again with a different person talking.

Discuss how it went the second time, did you find it easier or harder?

## Common traits of active listeners include:

- Undivided attention, not distracted by objects or environment,
- Non-verbal cues e.g. nodding, comfortable eye contact,
- Responsive sounds that reassure you they're listening, e.g. "hmm", "ahhh", "uh huh", "that's interesting", with sincere tone of voice,
- Responses being on topic and related to what you have said, often involving paraphrasing what you have said,
- Prompts to continue to further explain a point, open-ended, clarifying questions
- Recognising the emotions behind your words,
- Withholding judgement – maintaining an open, curious approach, allowing the speaker to express ideas fully without fear of criticism,
- Deferring their response – allowing you to finish without interrupting or mentally preparing their rebuttal.

## Your turn...

**How does it make you feel when you experience a conversation with an actively listening partner?**

This is because people who feel understood will stretch their understanding to stay in that comfortable synchronised neural pattern.

This drive to stay mentally connected is built into humans as a survival advantage. It's powerful. Yet without active listening no meaningful connection is made.

## Your turn:

**Before we look at the habit of active listening, as a group come up with a list of things people can do that are off-putting when you are trying to talk with them.**

### **Common examples are:**

- Interrupting the speaker,
- Responding vaguely or illogically to what was just said,
- Changing the subject abruptly,
- Obviously planning a response rather than receiving what is said,
- Looking at a phone, watch, around the room, or generally away from the speaker,
- Fidgeting (tapping the table, shifting position frequently, clicking a pen),
- Sighing or making disagreeable noises like snorting or giggling inappropriately.
- Demanding short answers

These habits drop us from listening to simply hearing.

It is fair to say stopping our bad listening habits helps but won't make us good listeners. That requires more steps and a lot of practice.

### **Your turn:**

**As a group, list a few things that supported you, and help you feel encouraged and connected to your conversation partner.**

### **Your turn:**

**Take a moment to acknowledge what your bad listening habits are.**

**We all have them!**